



## **BRULE RIVER STATE FOREST MASTER PLAN FACT SHEET**

### ***Recreational Use & Facilities***

One of the major purposes of the Brule River State Forest is to provide recreation compatible with the natural resource. Recreation facilities and policies are intended to provide quality recreation opportunities to the public while protecting the resource and public safety. State Park and Forest Vehicle Admission Stickers are currently required only at the two campgrounds and the picnic area adjoining the Bois Brule Campground. There is an additional fee for those who camp in the designated campgrounds. A Wisconsin State Trail Pass is required only for skiing on the groomed Afterhours Ski Trail. All rates are set by the state legislature and provide for differential fees for non-residents.

Campground registration, trail pass sales, occasional fisherman creel surveys, car counts, electric eye counters on the river, snowmobile, and ski trails provide a basis for user estimates. Taking that into account, the following annual recreational user statistics are based on monthly estimates by forest staff averaged over the past 5 years.

### **Canoeing, Kayaking, and Boating**

Since the character of the Brule changes over its length, there is canoeing and kayaking suitable for people of little experience to those of extensive experience. There are rapids rated from Class I to Class IV. The Forest offers 10 canoe landings along the Brule. For those who would prefer a lake on which to go boating, there are three lakes that have public landings. Twenty-two acre Rush Lake is a “wild” lake that offers a carry-in boat landing and two small parking lots. The 1913 acre Lake St. Croix can be accessed by using the concrete boat ramp at the St. Croix picnic area off of CTH A, located at the southern tip of the Brule Forest. Finally, 432 acre Lake Minnesuing can be accessed on the sand/gravel public landing on the south west end of the lake.

There is a commercial canoe/kayak rental and shuttle service in the town of Brule for those who would like to canoe or kayak the Brule River.

*An estimated 42,000 canoeist and kayakers visit the Brule River annually.*

### **Fishing**

The Brule River State Forest has 20 fisherman parking lots to help accommodate the seasonally heavy fishing pressure that occurs on the Brule River, Lake Superior, and the smaller lakes. Information boards are provided at each parking lot. Unmaintained footpaths lead to various fishing areas on the river.

*An estimated 33,000 anglers visit the waters of the Brule River State Forest annually.*

## **Camping**

The Brule River State Forest has two family campgrounds. Each have a wheelchair accessible site. Bois Brule Campground has 23 primitive sites, while the Copper Range Campground has 17 primitive sites. Both campgrounds have pit toilets, a hand pump, picnic tables, benches, fire grates, and a canoe landing. Bois Brule Campground is located on Ranger Road south of US 2 in Brule. Copper Range Campground is located 4 miles north of Brule off of CTH H. Neither campground has electric hookups. There is no reservation system in effect for camping and site choice is “first come, first serve”. Camping for backpackers and during gun deer season is allowed by written permit at no charge.

*An estimated 9,700 campers use the state forest annually.*

## **Picnicking**

There are three picnic areas in the Brule River State Forest. The one at the mouth of the Brule overlooks Lake Superior; another is adjacent to Bois Brule Campground; a third is on Lake St. Croix. Each picnic area has grills, picnic tables, and pit toilets. A single picnic table and grill is also provided at the Stone’s Bridge canoe landing for users of the facility.

*An estimated 5,000 people utilize BRSF picnic facilities annually.*

## **Hiking**

There are four normal hiking opportunities on the Forest. Stoney Hill Nature Trail is a 1.7 mile self guided nature trail that begins and ends near the Bois Brule Campground. This trail features interpretive signs and a breath-taking view of the Brule River valley. The Historic Bayfield Road Hiking Trail is 2.25 miles long. It is located off Clevedon Road about 3 miles north of US 2. This trail follows the route of an 1800’s stagecoach road and features 19<sup>th</sup> century copper mine shafts. The trail is popular for snowshoeing in the winter. The historic Brule-St. Croix Portage Trail is near the St. Croix picnic area on CTH A. The 1.9 mile trail was used first by natives and then explorers, fur traders, trappers, and missionaries as early as the 1600’s. The trail is on the Wisconsin list of historic places. There is a historical marker on CTH A about ¼ mile from the intersection with CTH P.

On 7 mile segment of the 2600 mile long North Country National Scenic Trail has been constructed between CTH A and CTH S along the east side of the Brule River valley, overlapping a portion of the historic St. Croix-Brule Portage Trail. Additional segments of the North Country National Scenic Trail will be constructed in the future.

*An estimated 3,000 hikers use the trail of the Brule River State Forest annually.*

## **Snowmobiling**

There are three snowmobile trails on the Brule River State Forest. First, the Brule-St. Croix Trail is 26 miles long and connects with other Bayfield and Douglas County Trails. Trailheads are at the St. Croix picnic area, and south of Brule on STH 27. Secondly, there is a snowmobile club trail connecting northern Bayfield County and the Tri County Recreational Trail. This trail is operated under a land use agreement on the 4.5 miles lying within the Brule Forest boundary. Lastly, there is the Tri-County Corridor that connects the City of Superior to the City of Ashland. It parallels the north side of US 2, passing through the Forest, though not on state forest property, impacting the Forest as a connector trail.

*An estimated 19,000 snowmobilers use the trails in the state forest annually.*

## **Swimming**

There are no designated beaches in the Forest. However, some enjoy swimming at Rush Lake and St. Croix Lake. Others brave the cold water of Lake Superior, and swim near the mouth of the Brule picnic area. There are days where over 200 people visit the sandy shoreline of Lake Superior near the mouth.

## **Wildlife Viewing and Hunting**

The Brule River State Forest has an extensive web of hunting walking trails for the upland bird hunter. There are over 38 miles of mowed hunter walking trails in the Brule Forest. Ruffed grouse hunting has been very popular in recent years, where many grouse hunters make several visits a years, and some even make several visits a day. There are over 38 miles of mowed hunter walking trails in the Brule Forest. Bear hunter numbers have been especially high in the last several years because of permit availability with a large bear population. Whitetailed deer populations are at very high densities attracting large number of hunter for both bow and gun seasons. There are also numerous squirrel, rabbit, and snowshoe hare hunters.

A wildlife viewing area exists on STH 13 near the Cloverland Community Club. The Forest has developed a bird watching guide for the interested public.

*An estimated 40,000 hunter visits are made to the Brule River State Forest annually.*

## **Cross Country Skiing**

The After Hours Ski Trail is about 8 miles long and is groomed for both classical skiers and skate skiers. The trail is made up of four connecting loops that enable the skier to ski different distances. There is a warming shelter at the trailhead that is jointly maintained by a local ski club in partnership with the Department of Natural Resources. Such events like a 12/24 kilometer ski race, and candle light ski occur at the trail every year.

*An estimated 4,000 skiers visit the After Hours Ski Trail annually.*

## **Biking**

The Brule River State Forest has no designated trails for biking, however the Tri County Corridor is commonly used for mountain biking. Cyclists who enjoy getting away from the crowd may use any of the marked hunting walking trails or the snowmobile trail. Town and county roads that pass through the forest are lightly traveled and offer cyclists scenic riding. Biking numbers have been increasing in the last few years.

*An estimated 400 visits are made by cyclists annually.*

## **All Terrain Vehicles**

All terrain vehicles are allowed on the Tri County Corridor year around. The Brule-St. Croix Snowmobile Trail is open to ATV's during the months that it is open to snowmobiling. ATV's are prohibited on all other state owned land on the Brule River State Forest.

## **Horseback Riding**

Horses are allowed on undeveloped areas in the state forest. There are no developed horse trails, but a few riders enjoy remote roads within the Forest.

*An estimated 80 visits by horseback riders were made on the Brule River State Forest trails in 1997.*

## **Other Recreational Uses/Activities**

Berry and mushroom picking and sight seeing are among other common activities on the Brule River State Forest.